



Flathead City-County Board of Health
1035 First Ave. West Kalispell, MT 59901
(406) 751-8101 FAX 751-8102
www.flatheadhealth.org
flathead.mt.gov/ems

FCEMS Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes of April 28, 2008

6:00 – 8:00 pm

Health Department Conference Room – Earl Bennett Building

Summary

The eleven voting member appointments for the advisory committee were announced. The three members of each of the three responding groups selected their initial “staggered start” terms of one, two, or three years.

The rest of the meeting focused on mill levy funding and what methods for funding special projects should be employed.

The next committee meeting will be June 2nd.

Action Items from This Meeting:

1. Everyone involved with Flathead County EMS is encouraged to provide feedback, suggestions, proposals, and plans to address response and transport issues.
2. The Advisory Committee members/attendees are requested to help generate the criteria for (mill levy) funding priorities as well as define those priorities.
3. The one-mill and two-mill budgets will be presented at the next meeting.
4. The regulations will be reformatted for “codification” and sent to the BOH for approval.

It is the mission of the Flathead City-County Health Department to assure the conditions in which people can be healthy through collaboration, education, promoting stewardship of our resources, and providing preventative health services to our community.

Attendees:

Robert Bates	FCEMS Medical Director
Marty Boehm	FCEMS
Joe Brenneman	County Commissioner; Creston Fire
Richard Briles	KRMC
James Brower	Marion Fire
Chuck Curry	ALERT
Rod Dresbach	West Valley Fire
Mary Granger	Lakeside QRU
Gary Mahugh	Creston Fire
Ken McFadden	NVH
Wayne Miller	Board of Health
Joe Russell	FC Health Officer
Lela Sistok	West Valley Fire
Doug Smith	Bigfork Ambulance; BOH
Gary Solomon	FCEMS
Tim Soule	Kalispell Fire
Wendy Stefaniak	Badrock Fire
Eda Taylor	Bigfork Ambulance
Bill Tidwell	Creston Fire
Kim Vierra-Diehl	West Valley Fire
Lance Westgard	Three Rivers Ambulance

Meeting Agenda

Announce the appointments for the FCEMS Advisory Committee voting membership and determine the ‘staggered start’ terms for the three groups of responders.

Open forum: mill levy funding; prioritization of special projects; unit funding and billing

Set the meeting date for the next meeting since May 26 is Memorial Day.

Meeting Minutes

Joe Russell opened the meeting with the announcement of the appointment of the eleven voting members for the advisory committee. The initial terms were determined by lot:

ALS Transport Units

Randy Brodehl	1 year	Kalispell Fire
Scott Alexander	2 years	Whitefish Fire
Lance Westgard	3 years	Three Rivers EMS

BLS Transport Units

Mary Granger	1 year	Lakeside QRU
Craig Williams	2 years	Evergreen Fire
Eda Taylor	3 years	Bigfork Ambulance

BLS Non-Transporting Units

Art Bielz	1 year	Smith Valley Fire
Bill Tidwell	2 years	Creston Fire
Lela Sistok	3 years	West Valley Fire

NVH off-line Medical Director

Dr. Ken McFadden 3 years

KRMC off-line Medical Director

Dr. Richard Briles 3 years

Russell announced there was about \$75k in the mill levy fund and about \$143k in current requests. He noted that mill levy funding occurs in November and May. Granger asked what happens to funds not allocated within one annual funding cycle and can a unit get a promise to carry over their annual allocation to the next year. (This is answered below).

Russell noted that this is a “voted levy” so the mill amount may be adjusted (annually) up to the maximum of 2 mills.

Granger asked about the guidelines for funding allocation decisions. Russell spoke about the need for some type of ranking system. He also noted that we should look into establishing a sinking fund and capital budget for large special projects. Russell offered some ideas about how to allocate funds such as population and service type. Current allocations are based on the census map and service area map. There are issues with “overlap” of multiple units within a service area.

Granger, Westgard, and Taylor had a discussion about billing for services when the patient is not transported. It was stated that Medicare requires transport to a hospital. Curry described some of the details about how ALERT charges for services. A discussion followed about charges versus volunteer services. Russell commented on the desire to evaluate the attributes of different types of services rendered in the context of charging for those services. McFadden suggested that we need to ask people for new ideas if they are not satisfied with the current situation. Dresbach, Granger, and Smith all noted the basic costs associated with maintaining a service. Taylor noted the additional stress upon volunteers when their call frequency increases. Boehm said, addressing McFadden’s comment, some people may be satisfied with the current situation.

Russell noted that every service area has a highway which affects call volume, (addressing call volume as a factor for funding). He also reminded that the legal limitation of annual carryover in the operating budget is 33%.

Brenneman (re)introduced himself as an EMT-Basic with Creston and a county commissioner. He spoke at length from the perspective of a taxpayer's advocate. He talked about the need to inspire more efficient activity (generally) and that it can be difficult to make the argument that taxes are being spent wisely. One suggestion was for the BOH to address consortiums of regional EMS care. One of our challenges may be to start all over and devise a system that works.

Soule proposed defining community needs by topic and funding by that method. The advisory committee would set the priorities for funding projects. Prioritization factors would include: getting something more; don't lose what you already have; don't fund what doesn't do anything better.

Bates mentioned that a previous survey was supposed to identify the biggest needs for Flathead valley coverage. Another issue is to support the people paying the taxes.

Smith stated the original levy funding priority was initial BLS i.e. to encourage all units to get to minimum BLS. Then the priority would shift to transport issues.

Responding to Brenneman, Sistok stated that West Valley Fire has brought up their level of response and training and they have used their levied monies well. Brower said that they have spent their monies on equipment.

Curry questioned the criteria for funding. He noted that special requests now overwhelm the population based distribution.

Briles said, from the perspective of getting patients to the hospital, that Bigfork, Three Rivers, and Whitefish take good care of their areas, and Kalispell Fire takes care of everything else. KFD is being run ragged. Transport is key. Dresbach said QRU is still important.

Smith said Lakeside is a priority for the valley. Bates said Lakeside needs EMT-Basics with endorsements to be paid to begin with. He said we don't need paramedics everywhere.

Bates and Russell both stated that KFD does not gain any significant money with EMT-B with endorsements over Paramedics.

McFadden pointed out that we're back to allocation by priority.

Miller read the following quote from the mill levy, "...for provision of ambulance services for the purposes of coordinating the emergency medical service units in Flathead County and direction, purchasing equipment, education and certification of responders and for patient care..." He expressed concern that the Board of Health is not honoring the legal mandate of the levy.

Mahugh stated there is currently a proposal to address the east valley transport issue and also, that conflicts exist. Miller emphasized that the BOH must address Flathead County.

Soule described how the system should drive and adapt the services provided rather than the existing services driving the county-wide system.

Russell, Westgard, Curry, and Tidwell had a discussion of the relative value of BLS response versus rapid transport. Russell and McFadden stated that both are needed and that we don't necessarily need paramedics to transport.

A brief discussion was had about rendezvous efficiency. Briles said he doesn't think they work very well.

Miller said, basically, this comes down to money available. We could use the county (levied) money to pay volunteers for transporting patients. Boehm noted that you can bill for two levels of care. Bates asked who gets paid. It seems that only the unit transporting to the hospital gets paid. Generally, ground to ground transfer / transport leads to one bill while ground to air transfer / transport leads to both units billing for transport.

Soule and Bates agreed that it makes good sense to get the patient moving and that a paramedic rendezvous with the BLS responders also makes good sense.

Miller stated the need to overcome the politics of mutual support. He is concerned about monetary issues and believes they should be overcome.

Russell said that he wants to look at this issue regarding the amount of multiple transports and asked about the prioritization of needs.

Sistok noted that West Valley Fire is all-volunteer and they are getting it done (re responses) but they still need the financial support from the county.

Curry noted the obvious vested interests of the participants and we can't expect this group to totally agree on prioritization.

Taylor asked Sistok if WVF was asking for more money. Sistok replied they are not.

Miller asked a question on billing. Curry responded that the logistics of transfer makes it difficult – that adding a medic to an existing transport unit would work better.

Many people commented on the regions which are most likely to have or need transfers: Marion, Lakeside, Creston, and Olney.

Smith went back to Miller's issue of meeting the reasoning for the (two mill) levy and the need to prioritize. Miller stated that we need this committee to address this issue or else the board (of health) will do it otherwise.

Russell offered a proposal of special projects taking 25% of the overall operating budget – up from 10%. He reiterated that staffing full time paramedics is not a good economic solution.

Granger said that Lakeside does not have the people to upgrade their level of service.

Soule said that if you define the Flathead Valley system, then the solutions will become apparent (paraphrased).

Russell repeated 25% for special projects with annual proposals required.

Granger noted there may be problems with continuity of programs based on annual funding.

Russell said we should be able to find a way to pay for unit to unit transfers and paramedic intercepts/rendezvous. Also, we need to establish priorities in the year prior to the needed funding. He mentioned setting aside 25% for special projects.

Brenneman clarified his comments to state that simply put, the levied money was not being spent for the levy as it is written, not to say that the money has been misspent or used poorly.

Russell asked what would be the characteristics of priorities. Boehm said look at the entire region first such as the 911 EMD request. Curry said to enhance a deficiency in an existing service.

Dresbach asked why 911 is coming to EMS for money instead of getting it from the first mill levied. Russell responded that EMD training did come out of the first mill levy. Dresbach asked if the first mill is being completely levied. Russell said it was about 0.92 mills last time. He will look into the first mill levy regarding training expenditures.

McFadden said (re priorities) look at both BLS response time intervals and transport time intervals.

Stefaniak asked about the difference for allocation based on service area versus population.

McFadden and Russell suggested rewarding coordination. Boehm suggested "special" sub-populations. Russell suggested number of runs. Curry said number of runs would not be fair due to reimbursements for some units.

Russell asked for any other inputs or comments to wrap up the meeting.

Mahugh asked for a year-end summary of disbursements to be provided to this committee. He made the point that money was not spent (by the units) in the past because there was no process for requesting and disbursing the money.

Russell stated that the money comes incrementally in November and May, so this sets the timing for funding proposals.

Miller asked what the action items were from this meeting. The reply was: present the 1 mill and 2 mill budgets; present the final regulations; present a list of funding priorities.

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 2 due to Memorial Day.